

September 19, 2011

Teacher of the Year Finalists Announced Today

The Newton County School System and the Newton County Chamber of Commerce are pleased to announce the top three finalists for Newton County's 2012 Teacher of the Year award.

After reading essays submitted by each of the school system's 22 Teachers of the Year, a panel of five judges spent two days interviewing each of the teachers. The three candidates earning the highest point totals and thus entering the final round of the judging are, in alphabetical order: Mrs. Karen Greene, East Newton Elementary School; Mr. Rothell Lewis, Jr., Live Oak Elementary; and Mr. Aaron Robinson, Newton High. On Monday, September 26, the Teacher of the Year selection committee will observe each of the three finalists in their classroom and the teacher with the highest combined score on the essay, interview, and observation will be announced as the 2012 Teacher of the Year during a special ceremony at Newton High School on Thursday, October 6 at 4:45 p.m.

This morning, Newton County School System Deputy Superintendent Dr. Dennis Carpenter; Ms. Nyree Sanders, Director of Human Resources; Dr. Ken Proctor, Executive Director of Elementary Education; Ms. Samantha Fuhrey, Executive Director of Secondary Education; Ms. Peggy Bullard, Business Manager; Ms. Sherri Davis-Viniard, Director of Public Relations; and school board members Shakila Henderson-Baker and Jeff Meadors surprised each of the finalists with flowers and balloons in their classrooms to make the special announcement to the teachers that they were one of the top three finalists. (School Superintendent Gary Mathews was unable to attend due to illness.) Friends and family members of the three finalists were also invited to join in on the surprise visits.

Mrs. Karen Greene has been employed with Newton County Schools since 1997. She currently teaches art at East Newton Elementary School. In previous years she has also been assigned to Mansfield and Livingston elementary schools. She also serves as East Newton Elementary School's Technology Teacher Leader as well as the Newton County School System's Content Specialist for Elementary Visual Art.

Ms. Greene earned her Bachelor's Degree in Art Education from Kutztown University of Pennsylvania in 1987. She earned her Master's Degree in Education with a specialization in technology integration from Walden University in 2010. She also holds an additional certification in middle grades social studies.

Ms. Greene is committed to mentoring future teachers through her involvement with the Newton County School System's middle school Job Shadow program, which allows eighth grade students to spend a few days in her classroom



(L-R): Dr. Kim Coady, East Newton Elementary School Principal; Ms. Karen Greene; and Dr. Ken Proctor, NCSS Executive Director of Elementary Education

in order to investigate her position as a possible career choice. She also serves as a mentor to newly hired teachers through the Newton County School System's BEST program.

When not teaching in the classroom, Ms. Greene is an active member of numerous community organizations. She is a member of the Newton County Arts Association, where she has volunteered for many of their young artists programs, including Creative Kids Camp. Ms. Greene has served as a liaison between the Arts association and the school system to develop professional development opportunities for Newton County art teachers at Oxford College. Using her knowledge as a Georgia Master Gardener, she also assisted the Georgia Wildlife Federation in developing garden designs and guidelines for outdoor classrooms that continue to be used throughout the state of Georgia for the development of outdoor classroom habitats.

"Wow! I believe I am still in shock," said Greene. "It is a great honor to be chosen from such an impressive group of professionals. I hope that I can represent my school with pride."

Mr. Rothell Lewis, Jr. is a special education teacher at Live Oak Elementary School, where he co-teaches math and reading. He began working for Newton County Schools in 2007 at West Newton Elementary School. He previously taught in Louisiana before relocating as a result of Hurricane Katrina.

Mr. Lewis earned both his Bachelor's Degree in Psychology and his Master's in Special Education from the University of New Orleans in 1995 and 2006 respectively. He earned his Education Specialist Degree in

Educational Leadership from Liberty University in 2010 and is currently working on his doctorate.



(L-R): BOE Member Shakila Henderson-Baker; NCSS Deputy Superintendent Dr. Dennis Carpenter; Mr. Rothell Lewis, Jr.; Dr. Ken Proctor; and BOE Member Jeff Meadors.

Mr. Lewis has been trained in behavioral management and de-escalation techniques of aggressive behavior and now trains teachers in the county at least twice a year. He is a firm believer in the importance of community, a message that his mother instilled in him when he was just a young boy. At age 12 he started tutoring 4th and 5th grade students in math, science, and English Language, as part of Trinity Episcopal Church's outreach ministry. He enjoyed tutoring so much that he continued to do so for the next 25 years, until he had to relocate because of Hurricane Katrina. Since moving to Georgia, he has chosen to support his community by being of service to his students outside of school. He attends numerous football games, soccer games, and basketball and karate practices in support of his students. He has also gone to his student's homes to help with discipline, homework or whatever the students needs.

“What an honor and absolute privilege to be one of the finalists for teacher of the year,” said Lewis. “I don’t think that there is a finer school and school system than Live Oak and Newton County. I am very grateful and humbled.”

Mr. Aaron Robinson began his teaching career at Pelham High School for Pelham City Public Schools in 1999 before coming back home in 2001 to the school where he graduated, Newton High School. He has taught social studies at Newton High ever since. Mr. Robinson currently teaches economics and AP (Advanced Placement) Macroeconomics.

Mr. Robinson earned a Bachelor’s Degree in Social Science Education from Georgia State University in 1998 and his Master’s in Social Science Education from the University of Georgia (UGA) in 2004. He is currently working on his Education Specialist Degree in Learning,

Development, and Design at UGA. He holds certification in both Advanced Placement European History and Macroeconomics/Microeconomics. In

addition he is certified in Gifted as well as Broad Field for grades seven through 12 (history, economics, psychology, sociology). He is a member of the Georgia Council for the Social Studies, the Professional Association of Georgia Educators, and the Georgia Council for Economics Education.

In addition to his teaching duties, Mr. Robinson serves as Newton High School’s Cross-Country Coach. Since 2000, Mr. Robinson has been elected Region Cross Country Coach of the Year—in 2000, 2001, and 2010. He has also served as a teacher mentor since 2006 and is the founding sponsor of the school’s Mock Trial Program.

Mr. Robinson is very active in the community, having lived here since his school years. He has routinely supported several non-profit organizations over the years, such as the Salvation Army, the United Way, and the YMCA because they support local entities to improve the lives of Newton County residents. He serves on his high school’s Academic and Athletic Booster clubs and has organized numerous fundraising activities for his student s to aid the fire department, police department, and local food shelters.

“I am honored humbled by this great accolade,” said Robinson. “I am thankful to my family, my fellow teachers, and the wonderful students at Newton High School for making this occasion both possible and a tremendous pleasure.”

The Newton County School System would like to congratulate each of the Teachers of the Year, as they are all worthy of this special honor. As such, all 22 Teachers of the Year will be recognized at the NCSS



(L-R) Dr. Dennis Carpenter; Ms. Samantha Fuhrey, NCSS Executive Director for Secondary Education; Mr. Aaron Robinson; and Dr. Craig Lockhart, Principal of Newton High School.

Teacher of the Year Reception at Newton High School on October 6 at 4:45 p.m. Each of the district's three finalists will receive crystal vase awards. The 2012 Newton County Teacher of the Year will also receive one dozen roses, a Teacher of the Year ring from Herff-Jones, and a check for \$1,000 from the Newton County Chamber of Commerce. In addition, this year's winner will also represent Newton County School System in the Georgia Teacher of the Year competition.

Newton County's Teacher of the Year program would not be possible if it were not for the support of our community. As a result, the Newton County School System and the Newton County Chamber of Commerce would like to extend special thanks to the Chamber Champions, sponsors of the 2012 Teacher of the Year program: Honda of Conyers, Bank of North Georgia, General Mills, Snapping Shoals EMC, BB&T, Capes Property Management, Integrated Power Solutions, Pattillo Construction, United Bank, Antiques & Stuff, AT&T, Beaver Manufacturing Company, Bizzy Bee Exterminators, DeKalb Technical College, Georgia Perimeter College, Georgia Power, Ginn Motor Company, Newton Citizen, Newton Federal Bank, Pinnacle Bank, Sunbelt Builders, and Tread Technologies.

For more information on the Newton County School System Teacher of the Year program, contact Ms. Sherri Viniard, Director of Public Relations for Newton County Schools at 770-784-2908.
